

Selected Articles from *The Individual* January 1998

Since 2002, each new issue of the SIF's journal, *The Individual*, has been uploaded onto the SIF's website at www.individualist.org.uk as a PDF file. Before that, online availability was very limited.

To remedy this, we have reconstructed back-issues of the journal using only the core articles. We hope that you will find them of interest. Any comments should be directed to the current editor of *The Individual* at editor@individualist.org.uk.

Please note that views expressed herein are not necessarily those of the SIF but are printed as a contribution to debate.

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AGAINST THE LEGALISATION OF DRUG USE

Ken Eckersley

In the last edition of *The Individual* [September 1997, but unfortunately not currently available] the Editorial insisted on "the individual's right to make their own decisions about what to do with themselves in full knowledge of the costs and risks" in the context of advocating the full legalization of drug use. As a lifelong supporter of individual freedom I cannot argue with that basic sentiment, as long as the individual decisions do not rob these individual's families, their school friends and/or their work colleagues of their equally valid individual freedoms.

However, it must be recognised that there is no way at all that personal decisions about drug-taking can be made with the certainty that the individual does in fact have "full knowledge of the costs and risks"! Freedom of choice is an old and cherished concept which must be defended at all costs, but if we are to deserve that freedom we must not shirk the responsibilities imposed by our right "to choose".

The main responsibility is that, in choosing, we should as far as possible try to know what it is to which we are committing ourselves and more importantly know to what we are committing those other individuals upon which our living and lifestyle most heavily impinge - especially when we do it without their prior knowledge or agreement.

We know that it takes a lot of money and liquid and a relatively long time to become an alcoholic. As a result - after first being able to sample the effects of alcohol - there are normally more than a few opportunities to change one's mind.

However, if you have actually worked with drug addicts and other users, misusers and abusers, you will know that THE ABOVE IS JUST NOT TRUE OF A MAJORITY OF DRUGS BOTH LEGAL AND ILLEGAL! There are not always opportunities for every individual to change his or her mind once drug usage has been started! In fact, only about 27% of those who experiment once or twice with drugs will not continue.

Depending on the individual's age, sex, body type, general condition and a variety of other habits and factors, two, or even one dose, can be enough to "hook" a person onto the escalator of increasing addiction - and for some unfortunates their very first "fix" has in fact proved to be their last earthly act. For others addiction can take longer, but it is nevertheless clear that, for the majority, even irregular continued "use" will inevitably lead to habituation and full addiction.

Yes, there are some who are able to adopt a 'take it or leave it' attitude, but even those lucky enough to escape advancing addiction will not escape the immediate current effects upon performance and quality of life of their last "fix", "score" or "hit" - nor will their own immediate environment of persons and possessions escape impingement.

One just cannot know in advance. And rapid addiction is not only true of street drugs like cocaine, heroin, ecstasy, crack and even cannabis, etc., but is also true of psychiatrically prescribed drugs such as Chlorpromazine, Methadone, Valium, Lardactyl, Prozac, Faverin, and a host of other sedatives, stimulants, and pharmaceutical prescriptions.

In other words - because of their unpredictable and often highly addictive effects - making the choice to take such drugs is in fact **choosing to have no further choice in the matter - without really knowing that that is the real choice under offer.**

The effects of any drug not only vary tremendously from one person to another but also vary considerably from one time to another for each individual. So the problem is that, although warned about it, because each individual can have no real prior concept of what is actually meant, he or she is therefore never really in a position to make a fully informed and responsible choice in the matter.

As a result they are unwittingly choosing to sacrifice their own individual freedom, and very often also the freedom of those around them, because the result of their "choice" does not stop with their family, their home and their colleagues, but "ripples out" across the society in the form of crime and increased policing, social services and taxation, etc.

Bear in mind that the vast majority of first-time users are well under 16 years of age, and that the information furnished to an individual on which to base a decision is usually highly coloured or distorted by their pusher's or "friend's" own unstated considerations which may well be of little importance or value to the individual receiving the "advice" or persuasion.

I will defend our rights to individual freedom to my last breath. But it does not mean that each person should be permitted to do just what he or she likes, and in fact the limiting factor must of course be the degree of restriction our actions place on the freedom of others to do what they like.

You appear also to be asking us to consider not only the "right" of the individual "pusher" to give free samples to children as part of the drug Baron's marketing strategy, but also the "right" of the psychiatrist to ignore the real and lasting damage suffered by a majority of patients for whom such drugs are prescribed and so to "freely" be able to go right on prescribing the damaging products of the pharmaceutical Giants!

Are we also to ignore the fact that up-to-date statistics from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents and from the forensic boys are now confirming the growing suspicion that accidents and accident victims resulting from "drug driv-

ing" (on both prescribed and illicit drugs) are now rapidly catching up with those resulting from "drink driving"!

Consider the most widely used and said to be least harmful illicit drug - cannabis. The late Sir William Paxton, Professor of Pharmacology at Oxford University said: "Marijuana is a drug with a multi-faceted action on nearly every bodily organ: brain, heart, lungs and endocrine glands - no real scientist can refer to it as a 'mild intoxicant'."

Dr. Robert Gilkeson, eminent neurologist and brain researcher said: "Cannabis makes great people average and average people dumb ... and causes more organic brain damage than any other drug of abuse except perhaps PCP (Angel Dust)...."

Dr. C. R. Schuster, former Director of the U. S. National Institute on Drug Abuse said: "I have been apologising to the American people for the last ten years for promoting the decriminalisation of marijuana. **I made a mistake.** Marijuana combines the worst effects of alcohol and tobacco and has additional ill-effects that neither of these two have."

We are now aware of the very real dangers of "passive smoking" of tobacco products. The physical effects of cannabis on lungs, heart and as a carcinogenic are much worse than tobacco. Legalise cannabis, and you deliberately introduce a huge new suppression of individual freedom for all the non-users. Is that libertarian?

Legally prescribed tranquillisers and the domestic problems which use of them creates, demand recurring police attention. The accidents and rising death toll increasingly related to legally prescribed methadone also demands increasing police attention. But to have a good comparison to the likely effects of legalising other drug substances, let's take a look at alcohol, the world's most widely used recreational drug, and therefore the drug we know most about under conditions of legalised consumption.

Football hooligans, domestic quarrels, pub brawls, joy riders, gang fights, arson, petty neighbour quarrels, kickings, stabbings, road accidents, hangovers, suicides, bankruptcies, vandalism, injuries to self and others, accidental breakages and deliberate break-ins, etc, night after night bring breaches of the peace and innocent public and police involvement - because of the drinking of alcohol by people *legally entitled* to by law. Then there are those who are not supposed to be drinking, such as those under eighteen years of age, and all those about to drive or already driving who are over the limit.

What do you think all this takes in policing, insurance costs and a poorer quality of life - all at tax-payers expense? And who do you think the tax payers are? Yes. You and me.

Now, under similar conditions, legalise cannabis, and watch all the above problems start to more than double. What happened in Holland will happen four times as big here, because we have four times the population and ten times as many large cities.

Watch our hospitals fill up with cannabis psychosis cases, see our social services and hospital budgets spiral out of control,

and our services collapse under the overload. And this would be caused just by the eighteen year olds and above.....*who would be legally allowed to use it.*

So watch also the eight to seventeen year olds who would not be officially allowed to use it, but who would unquestionably find it far far easier to get as much of it as they wanted, at easily affordable prices. One of the things which keeps youngsters off drugs right now is the price, but that barrier would soon come down with legalisation.

Forget about "A" levels and expect only "O" levels, because, as research has shown: "cannabis makes great people average and average people dumb"!

Legalizing only this one drug would vastly increase workplace absenteeism, injuries, accidents, damage to and stealing of employer and employee property, and - because employers have a statutory duty of care - would also increase litigation, which in turn would bankrupt small to medium sized businesses and increase unemployment, leading to more crime. And more crime leads to an increased restriction of individual freedom.

If greengrocers don't protest that crop sales are their business, all the legal distribution of cannabis will likely be in the hands of the pharmacists or even the cigarette sellers. So what will happen to all those out-of-work street cannabis pushers and drug barons?

Well of course, as they have done in places like Holland, they'd all move rather quickly into amphetamines, LSD, poppers, ecstasy, heroin, cocaine and crack.

And to whom would they sell them? Obviously - to their huge new marketplace of "highly responsible, straight thinking, **regularly stoned** but legal cannabis users, many of whom will be following the normal path of addiction development by moving on to better thrills and new highs"!

They'd also be focussed on the under 18s, who would have become *the* black market for cannabis. By far the majority of users start below this age, and legalization of adult buyers stokes up the "under-privileged youth" syndrome and renders them more wide open to pusher sales pressure.

What would the government be doing? Well, from an expanding group of increasingly stoned and those unambitious and very probably lower producing tax-payers, they would be trying to get the money to handle our rapidly escalating social services, hospital and unemployment costs. And after the loyal toast, the toastmaster announcing: "My lords, ladies and gentlemen - you may now smoke" - would take on an entirely new meaning.

Why "legalise" a habit that will eventually control you and thus destroy your freedom? A happy life is all about freedom of choice, and drugs rob you of that. Drugs are not bad because they are illegal - they are illegal **because they are bad!** If we need to seek a *cure* for addiction, then our society has already failed us - because prevention is the real cure, and legalization totally kills all chances of **prevention** - for all of us!

Mind you the choice is yours. But please don't start "using"

just to prove that!

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tered Drug & Alcohol Rehabilitation, Education & Training Charity No. 267386, known as "Narconon". He is also the Executive Director of C.A.R.E. - 'The Council for Addiction Rehabilitation & Education' and the Chief Executive of A.R.T.S. - 'Addiction Recovery Training Services'.

REVIEW OF TWO WORKS ON THE 'NEW WORLD ORDER'

Sean Gabb

International Efforts to Combat Money Laundering William C. Gilmore (ed.), Grotius Publications Limited, Cambridge, 1992, 335pp, 48 (pbk), (ISBN 0 521 46305 X).

Money Laundering: A Practical Guide to the New Legislation Rowan Bosworth-Davies & Graham Saltmarsh. Chapman & Hall, London, 1994, xii and 304pp, 49.50 (hbk), (ISBN 0 412 57530 2).

The first of these books is a collection of treaties, plus other documents, concerned with the international fight against money laundering. The second explains how these treaties have been enacted into, and are enforced under, the laws of the United Kingdom. Both works will repay the closest study. In clear detail, they show the growth of what must be called a New World Order, and how, without some interposing cause, this may produce a universal slide into despotism.

The fight against money laundering begins with realising that the "War on Drugs" has been lost. When goods are portable and easily concealed, and when demand for them is strong enough to bear almost any cost of bringing them to market, the main effect of prohibition will be to put a bounty on crime. For all the efforts of the past three generations, illegal drugs are available in most high security prisons. In much of the West, street prices have been stable or even falling since 1980.

The official response, however, has not been to give in and legalise the trade, but to expand the War to a front where previously there had been few hostilities. While keeping up their efforts against the trade itself, the authorities have turned increasingly to confiscating its proceeds. This new approach has three alleged benefits:

First, it will deprive criminals of their incentive to enter and remain in the trade;

Second, it will allow the punishing of those in charge of the trade - people who never touch or see illegal drugs, but to whom the main profits ultimately flow;

Third, it can make the War on Drugs self-supporting, and perhaps yield a surplus for other public spending.

There is, however, one practical difficulty. Before the authorities can confiscate the money, they must find it. To do this, they must keep it from being merged beyond recall into the general flow of investment. This involves ending bank secrecy and imposing a mass of financial regulation. Now, most people - especially the rich - dislike having their lives pruned into. Nor do banks like higher costs and limitations on what busi-

ness they can do. And so, given the present freedom of capital markets, no government acting alone can afford a strict policy of confiscation. It would, sooner or later, cause a flight of transactions to more liberal places.

The solution has been to try making everywhere in the world equally illiberal. Such was the purpose of the United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Narcotic Substances, signed in Vienna in December 1988 [full text in Gilmore, pp.75-97]. This is one of the most important international treaties of the past 50 years. It not merely requires its signatory states to criminalize the laundering of drug money, and to confiscate it where found, but lays down so far as possible a common wording for the criminal statutes, and a common mode of enforcement. It also requires full and prompt co-operation between the signatory states for the enforcement of these laws anywhere in the world. The Convention had little direct or immediate effect on British law. Many of its requirements, indeed, had already been met in the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986. Most others were only met in the Criminal Justice Act 1993, which enacts the European Community Directive of 1991 on the Prevention of the Use of the Financial System for the Purpose of Money Laundering [full text in Gilmore, pp.250-67]. This itself derives from the Vienna Convention only through the Council of Europe Convention on Laundering, Search, Seizure and Confiscation of the Proceeds from Crime 1990 [full text in Gilmore, pp.177-91]. Even so, this country is fast becoming a financial police state of the kind agreed at Vienna - and where the process cannot be traced to the Convention, it can be traced to the same international pressures of which the Convention is itself a result.

Let me explain. When I talk about a New World Order, I do not mean some grand conspiracy of bankers, or Jews, or Illuminati, or even - with far more probability - the American Government. There are countries where policy is largely dictated from outside. But for rich and powerful countries, the truth is more complex. Most international obligations imposed on this country, for example, were not only consented to by our rulers, but were usually proposed by them, and are enforced by agencies in which our own countrymen often occupy senior positions.

Where others see conspiracies, I see public choice economics. Whenever a government tries to do something dangerous or unnecessary, like banning drugs or educating the poor, it must set up an agency through which to spend the allocated funds. Once employed, the agents will - as if directed by an invisible

hand - start to find more and more justifications for expanding their status and numbers. They collect the statistics. They know which ones to publish and which to hold back. They are the politicians' first and favoured source of advice. They have their pet journalists. They trade favours with the relevant interest groups. They know exactly how to give themselves a pleasing life, and how to see off threats to it. Unless the money runs out, or the public turns really nasty, they can write their own budget cheques.

By natural extension, the same is now happening at the international level - though with potentially far worse consequences. First there is limitless money: budgets would need to swell unimaginably large to reach even one per cent of gross planetary product. Second, public anger seldom crosses borders; and, if all else fails, the politicians and bureaucrats in one country can shelter behind the excuse of treaty obligations that cannot be unilaterally cast off - not, at least, without consequences more horrible than words exist to describe. Third, the enforcement of international treaties means the growth of what is in effect an international bureaucracy. The local enforcers of a treaty may be citizens of the signatory states, who will live and work in their home countries, and may even occupy positions in the domestic administration. Yet these are people who, by virtue of the agreements they enforce, and the contacts they make and maintain in other countries, are members of an international order. And, in at least the case of money laundering, they will share an agenda that is often deeply hostile to their native institutions.

This can be seen - expressed with almost naive honesty - in the book by Messrs Bosworth-Davies and Saltmarsh. Both are British police officers: the latter is a departmental head at the National Criminal Intelligence Service. Both take it for granted that the world needs an international police force. Both are unable to believe that anyone can disinterestedly object to the necessary harmonisations of law, and the corresponding abolition of Common Law protections. They "know one senior clearing banker who has described this [money laundering] legislation as the nearest thing he has experienced to 'McCarthyism'..."[p.172]. Of course, they see things differently. The legislation discloses, on mature reflection, a set of carefully structured laws which, with good will, due diligence and a modicum of responsible attention from the banking industry as a whole, should not prove too burdensome. Indeed, the authors believe that some of the regulatory requirements have been diluted too much already, in a misguided attempt to placate the sensibilities of certain sectors of the industry....[ibid.].

With people like this advising the politicians and lecturing the rest of us, there is little wonder that the Drug Trafficking Offences Act predates the Vienna Convention by two years! Though they will hotly disagree - and even perhaps consider a libel writ - Bosworth-Davies and Saltmarsh cannot be regarded as our countrymen. More at home in a gathering of Bulgarian or Filipino police chiefs than with any of us, they are foreigners with British passports.

Somewhat less honest, though still interesting, is the Explanatory Report of the Committee of Experts who drafted the Council of Europe Convention [full text in Gilmore, pp.192-237]. Though formally subordinate to a committee of the vari-

ous European Ministers of Justice, these experts plainly saw their first duty as lying elsewhere. Call it "the international community" or their own order, their duty was collective and not to any single country. Look at their dislike of the narrow focus of the Vienna Convention. They wanted something that would also allow confiscation for terrorist offences, organised crime, violent crimes, offences involving the sexual exploitation of children and young persons, extortion, kidnapping, environmental offences, economic fraud, insider trading and other serious offences [Gilmore, p.204]. But they had to concede that not every European country might like its own laws against these acts to be written by an international committee. And so they allowed each signatory state to reserve whatever parts it wanted of these acts to its own legislative process.

The experts agreed, however, that such states should review their legislation periodically and expand the applicability of confiscation measures, in order to be able to restrict the reservations subsequently as much as possible [ibid.]. And this is only the beginning. As yet, the shape of world government exists barely in outline. But the tendency ought to be plain. Power is moving from national - and mostly democratic - governments to unaccountable and even invisible bureaucracies. Liberal institutions that are often the work of ages are being hammered into the transmitters of unlimited power. We are beginning to know how people in the Greek city states felt after absorption into the Roman Empire.

When the American militiamen cry out that the United Nations is about to invade in black helicopters and plant microcomputers in their bottoms, I am at least sceptical. This is not the New World Order that I see. What I do see is actually worse. We can shoot the helicopters down, dig out the microcomputers, and put the ringleaders on trial. We can go about playing the hero of our choice from Star Wars. But in the real world, there is no Death Star to blow up - no Darth Vader to push into the void. There is just a huge, elastic network of people, all acting in what they believe is the public good, most with some degree of public support.

How this kind of despotism can be resisted is another question, and I have said enough already. But I will repeat - the books here reviewed do repay a very close study. At the very least, it is useful to see the enemy's future plan laid out in such detail.

MEET THE NEW BOSS

Avedon Carol

A few weeks ago we had some dinner guests over who are known for being very active in campaigns generally associated with the left — you know, environmentalism, CND, that sort of thing. On paper it would be easy to make them look like mere caricatures of lefty politicians, but I know they are actually smarter than that.

Well, usually. But on this particular evening, its being the first time we'd had a chance to talk since the exciting events of May Day '97, our conversation naturally turned to our thoughts about the new government, and I came in for a bit of a shock. These reasonably intelligent, thoughtful people with analytical minds were almost unable to express any reservations about New Labour.

Sure, we'd all been delighted to be rid of that pack of thieving authoritarians who'd been in power for such a long time, but I'd never been so enamoured of the Labour Party that I'd failed to notice New Labour's dark side. Especially since New Labour seemed to be almost entirely composed of dark side, with perhaps a couple of honourable exceptions. Let's cast our minds back to those pre-election days when Virginia Bottomley was banning another satellite station every 15 minutes and Michael Howard managed to get a solo portrait on the cover of *Private Eye* bearing the legend: "Lunatic!". Does anyone but me remember that whenever the Home Secretary came up with a new load of repressive legislation, the best criticism his opposite number in the so-called "loyal opposition" could come up with was to say that it "doesn't go far enough"? Or that the closest Tony Blair could come to an expression of principle was to abstain on the Criminal Justice Act vote?

No, even then I knew better than to expect much from these lean and hungry wolves. It didn't take extra sensory perception to see that they were nothing to feel joyful about.

I went to bed on the night of 30th April fervently hoping that the British people would have an epiphany in their sleep and wake up in the morning prepared to punish ALL the charlatans and vote Liberal Democrat just to teach them all a lesson.

Still, it didn't surprise me to see the jubilation that seemed to flow in the streets on the second day of May — hell, even I was so sick of the Tories that I felt a little bit lighter of heart, despite my sense of foreboding. Some Labour supporters who had noticed the campaign pandering were at least alert enough to express the hope that Blair and Straw had just been lying to get into office and would now revert to more sensible policies. But I had a bad feeling about these people: I suspected that they actually meant to follow through.

And they have, even more vigorously than I feared. They have jubilantly passed all the bright new repressive policies that Michael Howard and his pals had sought to introduce, includ-

ing those that Labour had objected to in opposition. Chris Smith has turned out to be Virginia Bottomley in a clever plastic disguise. Tony Banks has been neutered and turned into a convenient clown toward whom the press can be distracted when Blair wants to work in the dark.

So surely they can't get away with it, can they? Surely all those lefties who screamed whenever the Tories pulled these stunts can object to them just as loudly when Labour is the culprit, can't they? You might wonder. But it doesn't appear to work that way. The Labour victory seems to have cauterized their tongues, deadened their speech centres.

Or bought them off. In the year preceding the election, I increasingly noticed that grants to progressive organizations which could normally be expected from Labour-associated groups were falling off. Nowhere was this more obvious than at the National Council for Civil Liberties (NCCL, aka "Liberty"), who Labour could see as an ally in opposition but who, if operating effectively, could only be a threat to a government that proposed to remove even more of our dwindling civil liberties.

At the annual general meeting of "Liberty" in the spring of 1997, the keynote speaker was Jack Straw. And from that moment, press statements from "Liberty" have been almost uniformly in support of Jack Straw's agenda, despite the fact that every one of these statements has been in direct contradiction to the policies of the National Council for Civil Liberties. NCCL has long opposed registers and indefinite sentencing, even for murderers, but now "Liberty" tells the press that they see "no problem" with such moves. Someone at "Liberty" told the press that they "welcome" language in the latest Police Bill that allows the police to bug people's homes. And that "Liberty" has no policy on decriminalization of cannabis, although NCCL has had policy supporting decriminalization for decades. Are these things that a civil liberties organization should be saying?

Well, no, of course not. But they are things that the Home Secretary has been promoting, and the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, is on a first-name basis these days with John Wadham, the Director of "Liberty". Wadham seems also to have been more obsessed these days with getting rid of NCCL's most reliable workers, and some people have honestly wondered whether this is in response to a wish by someone in the Labour Party - perhaps Straw himself - to see the organization purged of its few remaining active civil libertarians.

See, real civil libertarians don't really care much about party affiliation. And that's been a real problem for this modern monstrosity called "Liberty", which seems to be so wholly in the pocket of Labour that many civil libertarians just cannot bring themselves to trust "Liberty" with their money and energy. Many have chosen to escape into the aether of the Inter-

net, which seems to be run perforce according to the protections of the US Constitution's 1st Amendment - protections the rest of the world does not have.

So there you have it. The voices that should be opposing government repression are silent because they have either been hoodwinked into complacency or bought off. The press promotes the fiction that we all love Tony Blair, although even the staunchest Labour supporters admit that he gives them the creeps. The "opposition" in the Conservative Party has no basis to complain since to do so they'd have to oppose the

policies they initiated and supported for two decades in control of government. So this government, with its overwhelming majority, has no opposition at all.

Yet my dinner guests seemed so cheery. But it frightens the hell out of me.

Avedon Carol is the author of Nudes, Prudes and Attitudes: Pornography and Censorship (New Clarion Press, Gloucester, 1994), and a founding member of Feminists Against Censorship.

REVIEW OF HENRY WEAVER'S *THE MAINSPRING OF HUMAN PROGRESS*

Martin Ball

Henry G. Weaver, with a New Introduction by John Hood. Published by The Foundation for Economic Education, 272pp \$12.95 pbk [3rd Edition].

For once the quote on the front cover says it all: "...there can be no progress except through the more efficient use of our individual energies...." Individual, not collective. Short, but to the point. The book itself, though, is something of a ramble through American history. The author sets himself some rather grand questions to answer, but perhaps over-indulges his own interests to the neglect of engaging the reader's interest and unforced attention. The big question is: Why after six thousand years of many people dying of hunger, we do not?, supplemented by Who invented zero (0) and why?

Weaver's most telling point is that the contributions of great American entrepreneurs such as John Deere, Thomas Edison, and Henry Ford to society were far in excess of that of many political or military leaders better known to the public. He even observes how early American political heroes such as Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson were important inventors and entrepreneurs in their own right.

The author has no qualms about the rewards businessmen receive for their individual energies. "No matter how much money John Deere may have made, it would be insignificant in comparison with the tremendous overall benefits shared by millions of people" from his innovative steel plow that made prairie agriculture viable. And Weaver is in no doubt what motivated Deere. "It's just possible that good old John Deere wouldn't have bothered his head about the plowing problem if he hadn't been living in a free country, where an ambitious blacksmith had a chance to become a prosperous manufacturer."

The book contains many interesting points but the busy reader, at least, might be a bit irritated by the author's wordy self-indulgence in his own particular interests rather than those essential to the main theme.

Martin Ball has degrees from Nottingham and Sheffield Universities, and is the Information Officer for FOREST. He is also author of The Conservative Conference and Euro-Sceptical Motions 1992-95, published by the Bruges Group.

REVIEW OF MELANIE PHILLIPS' *ALL MUST HAVE PRIZES*

Michael Holt

Little Brown 1996. £17.50, 384 pp

In devastating detail, Phillips charts the Gadarene flight from literacy and knowledge that has taken place in Britain's education system from nursery school to university. As an experienced textbook writer of schoolbooks on mathematics, English, and science, I have been forcibly made aware, when my sales dramatically fell away, of the politically correct dumbing-down of children's minds. Texts, anyway, are now written, not

by individual authors, but by committees which must toe the party line of the absurd Notional [1] Curriculum which few teachers enjoy having blindly to follow. Having attained the heady heights of Key Stage 109.5, Level 23, a GCSE candidate, in our new-new-egalitarian society, is now automatically assured of a pass. GNVQ examinees have an easier run, if not their roll-on-early-retirement-from-stress teachers. Shades of Meat 2 in Tom Sharpe's novel Wilt. Yet these self-same successful exam candidates will one day, we hope and pray, be

footing the bill to pay for our pensions and, note, the pensions of the very perpetrators of the New Literacy who, like the Dodo in Alice in Wonderland said of the Caucus Race, propose that "All must have prizes".

The New Literacy - actually the New Illiteracy - Phillips rightly castigates. Children are no longer taught the 44 basic phonemes, yet the phonic method is taught in nearly every European country. And successfully, too. In fact children aren't taught anything now. The Marxist academics who cobbled together the National Curriculum consider teaching a dirty word - distinctly politically incorrect. We don't 'teach' now, but 'facilitate learning'. One might have thought, with Britain joining the European federation any day now, that we ought to teach phonics and grammar (another dirty word) as they do in France, Germany, and Switzerland which have an enviably high level of adult literacy.

As adult literacy rates are statistically closely correlated with, average life expectancy, maybe the National Curriculum should carry a health warning: 'Illiteracy can shorten your life - more than smoking does!' The new orthodoxy makes a non-sense of Chomskian generative grammars for certain. Still, who needs to be able to read or write - children are not expected to write essays any more, only ridiculous diaries and emotional outpourings about their 'creative feelings' while they get the meaning off the page by, presumably, osmosis. Where the Nazis had to resort to burning certain books to make them unavailable to a reading public, the politically correct educationalists have solved the problem by creating an illiterate public.

In the de-education of Britain, Melanie Phillips gives compelling evidence of how standards are sliding. And unarguably so in a non-value- judgement topic such as maths. Despite this alarming evidence of the de- skilling of Britain, she writes, the people who taught mathematics teachers remained unabashed and defiant.....the retreat from knowledge into subjectivity has been driven along by educationalists in the universities, people who taught not maths itself but 'maths education'. Having taught maths in colleges of education, I know this to be true. I was once asked by an earnest but hostile student, "What right have you to know so much maths?" implying that somehow it wasn't fair. I explained that, apart from having a certain flair for, and an unfashionable interest in, the subject, I had actually worked at it.

In general science, Phillips quotes an educational chestnut where GCSE examinees had to choose from four pictures of a bird nesting, eating a worm, defecating, and flying. "Which picture shows the bird eating?" they were asked. Not much of a test for a seven-year-old I would have thought.

The anti-grammar obsession and an unreasoning ideology of politicized education is explained by Phillips in frightening detail. Irrationality has now taken over under the guise of that catch-all word 'communication' where undergraduates cannot see the grammatical difference between 'He has a bad teacher' and 'He is a bad teacher'.

One language teacher, naturally unnamed, is quoted as saying, "I teach grammar in secret". Were she to be shopped, she'd almost certainly be out of a job. This happened in the infa-

mous episode in 1990 when the educational psychologist Martin Turner 'lost his job and saw his reputation persistently trashed by educationists because he produced figures demonstrating a huge drop in reading ability of hundreds of thousands of seven- and eight-year-olds....south of the Wash.... Turner's research is misrepresented and rubbished to this daybecause he advocated teaching phonics and blamed the 'real books' approach for the decline in reading'. This is just one illustration of the fanaticism inherent in redefining literacy on politicized grounds.

Melanie Phillips shows in gripping and clear prose how the hangover of Marxism has wrecked our once-prized education system. If the situation is not corrected Britain will fall behind in vital scientific research.

For me Phillips most startling revelation was the Machiavelian scheming of the Department of Education mandarins who finally got Mrs Thatcher, of all people, with her Samuel Smiles ethos of self-help, to rubber-stamp the New 'Literacy' now enshrined in the National Curriculum. The Iron Lady was shamelessly railroaded over education. 'The national education currency', Phillips writes, 'was devalued. The government lost the battle because it was fighting the effects of a culture it did not begin to understand'.

A culture that had undermined relationships between individuals, between parents and children, and between teachers and pupils, so that everything of value was falling apart. Hence the flight from parenthood and the resulting disordered children - today, I note, suffering computer strain injury; the no-blame, no-shame, no-pain society insidiously deconstructed (ie destructed) of its past.

Teaching was the most highly respected skill, but no longer is. It should still be.

Phillips concludes less with a recipe for improving things but with a programme for survival. Individuals must take matters into their own hands: reinstate the learning of phonics, of grammar, of the skill of writing good clear English and of rationally taught science and maths, of learning French and German that won't make Brits abroad appear to speak like illiterate peons, and to insist that 'teaching' is not a dirty word. Our future is in our hands, not theirs, the unelected politically-correct panjandrums (who've probably never taught in a school) and the pea-brained Poo-Bahs clinging on hubristically to their brief authority. As Voltaire said, 'Ecrasez l'in-fame!' - Stamp out abuses. For, fundamentally, the New Literacy amounts to intellectual child-abuse and a snide way to keep ethnic groups in their place - at the bottom of the heap.

This book is a disturbing but very rewarding read for anybody concerned with real education and the freedom it should make both possible and rewarding.

[1] This is NOT a misprint.

REVIEW OF THREE WORKS ON POLICING AND PRISON

Paul Anderton

Zero Tolerance; Policing in a Free Society by William Bratton, Norman Dennis (Editor), Ray Mallon, John Orr, Charles Pollard. 138pp. £8.00 pbk.

Does Prison Work? By Charles Murray, Malcolm Davies, Andrew Rutherford, Jock Young, 54pp £6.00 pbk. Both Published by The Institute of Economic Affairs, Health and Welfare Unit, 2, Lord North Street, London, SW1P 3LB

Prison Writing No 10, 1997 Edited by Julian Broadhead. P.O. Box 478, Sheffield, S3 8YX. (ISSN 0966 4920) £12 per year.

'Zero Tolerance' does not mean 'intolerance' in any political, religious, or cultural sense. It means the recent innovation in police practice of not tolerating any crime, particularly by young men and street gangs, and even including minor acts of anti-social behaviour. This was intended not only to make life easier and more pleasant for ordinary people but also to preempt the usual progression for individual young people from minor acts of vandalism and crime to committing major offences.

The origin of the idea and practice is generally considered to be New York, USA in 1994 with the appointment of William J. Bratton as Police Chief, who writes the main theme-setting article. He replaced the aim of achieving the quickest possible reaction to complaints from the public with the more positive one of Zero Tolerance. This was evidently successful in reducing both minor and serious crime in New York quite dramatically. Bratton explains in some detail the history of crime and crime prevention in New York leading to the Zero Tolerance policy, though Charles Pollard, in the second contribution, attributes the origin to the 'broken windows' theory developed by George Kelling and James Q. Wilson in 1982. Pollard also considers other police policies which have apparently succeeded and suggests that Zero Tolerance should be applied as part of a more general policy.

Norman Dennis and Ray Mallon (DCI at the time) consider the application of effectively Zero Tolerance, renamed 'confident policing' in the English northern city of Hartlepool. This is very different from New York, being much smaller and having no major criminals and consequently a very different 'culture' which is described in some detail. The new confident policing policy quickly gained local approval and apparently succeeded in significant crime reduction. (Unfortunately Ray Mallon has recently been suspended, but apparently on grounds that have no connection with the Zero Tolerance policy)

Another similar initiative was the 'Spotlight' programme introduced into Strathclyde by John Orr who describes it in the final contribution. Initially the force concentrated on eleven areas highlighted by the public as being of special concern - carrying weapons, underage drinking, street robberies, trans-

port network, vandalism, drinking in public, parks and public places, licenced premises, truancy, sporting events, litter and public nuisance. (Perhaps notable is that drugs were not on the list). Co-operation with other agencies was sought, and achieved, and the policy gained general support together with very significant improvements in crime control and the 'feel safe' factor among the public. John Orr is sure 'Spotlight' is here to stay and will be developed and extended to other areas of public concern.

Charles Murray in 'Does Prison Work?' attributes variations in crime levels to the use of imprisonment - in particular the risk of imprisonment for any convicted criminal. His primary evidence is time series graphs of crime rates and imprisonment statistics for America. On a simplistic level these are convincing and in line with 'common sense'. He considers arguments for and against imprisonment on other grounds and concludes, among other things, that when crime rates are relatively low it is disastrous to reduce the use of imprisonment for those crimes which are committed.

Jock Young in the chapter headed 'The Dilemmas of a Libertarian' points out that the level of imprisonment and its risk are by no means the full story or the simple solution on the causes and cure of crime. He produces figures from European countries which apparently cast doubt on the universal efficacy of prison as cure. He also mentions the usual list of other social factors that contribute to crime; levels of social control, employment, child rearing, social and moral climate, organised crime, plus complications from perceived injustice or the felt injustice of bad policing or imprisonment. In passing he attacks Murray for being inconsistent in his explanations of large scale 'bad behaviour': welfare dependency in Losing Ground, disintegration of family in The Emerging British Underclass, low intelligence in The Bell Curve, and now soft penal policies in Does Prison Work. So the implication seems to be that if prison seems to work over some limited time, and in particular countries, it is still not necessarily 'the answer' - rather like systems for picking winners in horse races, they work for a while and then start losing!

This is not surprising because both purposes and practices are hopelessly confused. For one thing all debate seems to take for granted the rather odd theory that at any particular time there is in 'society' a section of 'bad' people who commit crimes and so 'deserve punishment' - that is something unpleasant happening to them. This experience is then assumed to prevent such individuals committing more crime and so act as a 'cure' for crime in general. In practice this certainly doesn't work because a lot of the people who do experience punishment of some sort continue to commit crimes. That is why alternatives have been sought and tried.

But none of these works, or is likely to, because they are all based on two great illusions. One is that 'feelings' cause be-

haviour; the other is that virtuous, or at any rate non-criminal behaviour, being in fact the most usual in the population, is also 'normal'.

'Feelings' certainly often accompany certain actions, but the immediate cause must be the current environment. In higher animals 'feelings' probably act as an additional reinforcement to basic conditioning. Eysenck illustrated the acquisition of 'moral' behaviour in the form of giving up immediate attractive indulgence in favour something less attractive but more 'acceptable'. If you wanted to train a puppy, say for advertising purposes, apparently to prefer a propriety dog food to, for instance, raw liver then all you needed to do was wait until he was obviously hungry then present him with the two alternatives but whenever he showed interest in raw liver give him a gentle tap on the nose with a rolled up newspaper. After only a short 'training' he will display aversion to raw liver in favour of manufactured dog food. However, an adult dog who had indulged in raw liver for some time would be much more difficult to 'retrain' - taps with rolled up newspaper would be quite ineffective, more likely electric shocks would be needed.

In general very light almost non-painful punishment is sufficient for training purposes and is in fact the basic biologically evolved learning mechanism. But socially acceptable levels of punishment will quite likely not be sufficient to 'retrain' individuals who have found criminal behaviour rewarding (the equivalent of our puppy indulging in raw liver). Also note that there must be an acceptable and easily available alternative to the 'bad' behaviour which is capable of satisfying the desire which produced the bad behaviour.

The 'pop-morality' rules - where 'wrong' behaviour 'deserves' punishment are, of course, basically an intuitive and unscientific application of the conditioning process. Unfortunately this intuitive appreciation of basic biology has become intertwined with other notions, particularly religion, and incorporated into morality theory. Punishment is justified, and even seen as obligatory, not on the grounds of its demonstrated effectiveness, but according to ad hoc rules made up often in response to transient moral panics and perceptions of political expediency or advantage.

In so far as this confusion is expressed through the prison system the results are chaotic.

About a year ago I 'sat in' on a Parole Board meeting to consider the parole application of Peter, a 'lifer' convicted of multiple rape one of which he admitted and the other he disputed. He also disputed his conviction on the grounds that his 'confession' was forged by the police. His wife, who is a friend of mine, and myself were 'observers' which meant we could watch but not say anything. In attendance were a young Home Office solicitor, Peter's solicitor, a brown-skinned psychiatrist, an overweight female psychologist, a Prison Governor from Marsh Lane 'observing', and Judge Cotton who was in charge.

After hearing Peter's submission, there was a hitch in the proceedings because there was no report about his performance on a psychological rehabilitation course. Peter's solicitor insisted that the report was essential instead of meekly agreeing to do without it as was evidently expected. Judge Cotton was

very annoyed and delivered a rebuke to the Home Office solicitor who stammered an apology and promised to make every effort to get some information as soon as possible, for which the meeting was adjourned. During this time, in which we just hung around in a corridor, I asked the Prison Governor who was observing if it was, as I had heard, widely believed that Michael Howard was the worst Home Secretary since 1685? He reacted like a frightened faun and mumbled that he could not comment on any such question.

A report was eventually faxed and we all got a copy. It consisted of three single sentence paragraphs saying, in effect, that Peter had attended all relevant sessions and had made satisfactory progress. I hope this psychologist (another female apparently) was employed and so didn't charge. An independent report on Peter - three pages - cost £1000 (on legal aid of course) for conclusions arrived at from perusal of records and a 30-minute interview.

This review was pointless anyway. Peter's solicitor told Peter that he could 'get anything off his chest' that he wanted to because this meeting was just a formality. The next one, at least two years later, was when it might get serious. So Peter complained that the supposed psychological rehabilitation sessions were often unsatisfactory because staff did not turn up. The overweight psychologist gave the usual bureaucratic justification - the rules said the session was viable if two out of the three statutory staff were present and that had always been satisfied, even if those who were there were not qualified. In any case the so-called rehabilitation for sex offenders is hardly likely to inspire confidence. For one thing child molesters are mixed with rapists which causes resentment as the rapists regard themselves as basically 'normal' but the child molesters as 'perverts'.

In any case the standard practice of getting 8 or 9 offenders to question each other 'in depth' about motives and actual behaviour, sometimes with role-play as well, with the aim of getting each participant to recognise the offence and so 'reform' is hardly convincing. It clearly assumes that 'feelings' induced in completely artificial circumstances are going very significantly to change behaviour in very different circumstances - that is 'outside'.

If you can remember, as I can, the Hitler war you might also remember some Pathe or Movitone propaganda item intended to inspire confidence in the British army on the grounds that its training methods could 'convert a mild bank clerk into a ruthless killer' in about six weeks of training. So 10, 12, 15, years or sometimes more in the prison system to achieve the reverse effect does seem rather excessive unless the methods are somewhat flawed to say the least. The difference is environment of course - which also accounts for otherwise civilised people doing unspeakable things during the Nazi era.

But inmates nevertheless have 'Hobson's choice' over participating - the chances of parole depend on how many rehabilitation courses have been completed. Also the pernicious requirement that they must admit to guilt whether or not they do believe it. [It seems that guilty verdicts by juries are virtually sacrosanct, but if they bring too many not guilty verdicts then juries get abolished, as in drink driving cases, and the

more compliant magistrates are given the job].

As a local election 'paper candidate' I came across numerous 'underclass' characters, usually from the 'deprived' council estates, who are nearer the types Murray is chiefly concerned with in *Does Prison Work?* When one of them was jailed I still kept in touch because she wrote to me and rang quite often from jail. Her mother was in jail when she gave birth and the daughter had been 'in care' all her life until 16. At first I naturally assumed that being in care she would have received the benefit of the best child rearing practices developed by psychological experts of the same standard as those who devoted themselves to reforming criminals and would therefore have near-perfect manners and morals and education to the limit of her abilities.

However, she was in fact very foul mouthed in a rough local accent, quite good at reading and writing but devoid of mathematics, and prone to outbursts of violent irrational anger. She had a long record of shoplifting, street prostitution, and house burglary, and a liking for cannabis and particularly crack when she could afford it. A serious incident of aggravated burglary led to the two year sentence served in New Hall, Wakefield, Yorks. Her aggressive temper resulted in her spending a lot of time 'behind the door' (locked in her cell all day) or 'on the block'. Fortunately her boyfriend and sister managed to get some cannabis to her on visits. [her boyfriend and I had found that the best way of calming her anger was to give her a 'spliff' with about twice the usual cannabis content]. Otherwise she was given 'work' which filled in time and probably looked progressive to any visiting luminaries. I wrote to the governor, a Mr English, suggesting she might be taught to speak properly and at least master elementary arithmetic, but got no reply. She was released after 17 months still with bad accent, bad temper and old habits. Within a month she was pregnant and quite sure she would be given a Council flat. As usual, bureaucratic incompetence cost the taxpayer a lot of money several times over.

During the last Conservative Conference (Oct 7- 10th 1997) I went to a 'Law and Order' fringe meeting addressed by Helen Schofield, deputy Director of the Probation Officers Association and a retired Prison Governor. As it was not Judge Argyll calling for a restoration of the Death Penalty it was not at all well attended - only 25 (including me), and those who were there turned out to be mostly 'professional' - probation officers, prison governors, social workers. After the usual kind of address from the principal speakers indicating how well they were doing in spite of new difficulties particularly due to 'lack of resources', I asked a couple of questions.

To Helen I asked whether it wouldn't be a lot better to reward virtue systematically on the grounds that all behaviour must be selfish in the sense that there was no other ultimate source of the acceptance or otherwise of ideas and values? She agreed with more rewards for virtue but apparently misunderstood the implication that punishment without opportunities for acceptable virtuous behaviour was likely to be ineffective.

The other question, to the retired Prison Governor, was about the invasion of private autonomy just for the sake of the drugs policy when in fact turning a 'blind eye' on drug use would make management much easier? I didn't get an answer to that either, of course, just a long rambling account of what

was being done and how successful it was.

At a Freedom Association conference I met John McVicar who told me there was a Probation Officer who was actually quite sensible and that he was based in Sheffield - easily available to me. That was Julian Broadhead who edits the third work considered here. This contains various examples of writing by prisoners, both prose and poetry, and an interview with a notorious criminal, conducted by Julian Broadhead himself, Freddie Foreman, associated with the Great Train Robbers and the 7 million Security Express robbery, and the author of *Respect*, his autobiography. It gives a 'straight from the horse's mouth' view of prisons and criminal life and attitudes. This is quite revealing for anybody interested in that topic.

Just what you make of it depends, I suppose, on where you start from. One possibility is that any criminal deserves whatever unpleasantness occurs to them and there is no point wasting time bothering about excuses. You can always tell the difference between the people who are 'good' because they recognise that as rational and of general benefit in the long run and those who are 'good' to impress others with their virtue or because they fear the penalties. The first sort assume that wrongdoers can be persuaded to reform whereas the others enjoy the idea of punishment whether useful or not. This is the basis of the appeal for applause from self-righteous hoi-poloi at political conferences, by the likes of Michael Howard and Jack Straw in return for promises of 'tough measures' against criminals in future.

What is both sensible and in fact largely implied, but not admitted to, in much so-called reform and 'new initiatives' is that the major influence is the immediate environment with learning, particularly in the most sensitive, early life times, also influencing reaction. To suppose otherwise, that there are two kinds of people 'good' and 'bad' leads to bizarre incoherence. If there are two kinds then the distinction must be in the genes. This can hardly be credible except in a secondary sense - perhaps for some people whose nervous system is resistant to learning, or whose intelligence is so low that they cannot work out consequences (echos of Murray's *Bell Curve*). And if the types are fixed why do proportions vary with risk of imprisonment, for instance?

So we must accept that we all start off with equal propensity to become 'criminal' but some of us, definitely the writer and probably the readers of this review, find ourselves in circumstances where being 'good' pays off in general, but others find themselves in circumstances where what looks 'bad' to us seems, to them, the best deal they can get.

Zero Tolerance is one positive move in the right direction to stop the slide from petty offences to serious crime which many young men, in particular, follow. But as with Eysenck's puppy there should also be constructive alternatives available, so it is unlikely that Zero Tolerance on its own is the full 'answer'.

But neither is prison. Or at any rate I hope it isn't and does not appear to be because if it was it would appear to vindicate the knee-jerk simplistic reactions to problems characteristic of self-righteous tabloid editors and readers. Not to fall for this one again would be of real benefit to them as well as the

rest of us. A real case of good being done in ways the beneficiaries don't recognise. The bribe of doing nasty things to people they don't like has enabled politicians and their so-called expert advisors to pick the pockets of the taxpayers again and again. Perhaps the saddest part of *Does Prison Work* is for a commentator of Murray's eminence to call for more spending 'at every level of the criminal justice system' (p27).

So what happened to all the money spent already? And the persistent erosion of common law and civil rights which now provides just about all the government powers necessary to establish a police state?

If there is more money to be spent perhaps we could get back the rights we had in say 1900, when crime rates were much lower, on the grounds that the removal of such rights has not produced the promised benefits? And what about the money spent on communal housing whose expensive schemes are now some of the main breeding grounds for crime? And edu-

cation which after about six generations has produced an illiteracy rate little different from that before it started? What about all that culture and enlightenment that education was supposed to impart and so lead to better understanding and appreciation of the 'good' in the whole population, the disadvantaged in particular (that's why they are not asked to pay for it)?

Yet every discernable stage of descent into further chaos and failure produces demands for yet more resources (money) to be given to the people and institutions who had promised to solve the problems with every one of the previous injections of 'more resources'.

What is really needed is a further extension of Zero Tolerance - to include failed promises from politicians, police, educationalists, and all varieties of social reformers, and particularly of demands for yet more money and bureaucratic opportunities to interfere with personal decisions until the previous promises are delivered.

REVIEW OF DAVID GREEN'S *BENEFIT DEPENDENCY: HOW WELFARE UNDERMINES INDEPENDENCE*

Paul Anderton

IEA, 2 Lord North Street, London, SW1P 3LB Choice in Welfare No 41, xi + 49pp £6.00 pbk.

In this work David Green has condensed a great deal of valuable scholarship into a very convenient short work. The Introduction is an excellent survey of the development of state 'support' from about 4% of the population 'dependent' on it to about 27% today. Obviously the cost of this welfare provision has risen alarmingly so it is now by far the highest single item of government expenditure.

There is some confusion over the purpose of the social security system, there being essentially three rival views all of which are to some extent incorporated into party political attitudes. One justification is relief of any hardship which is due to unforeseen or unavoidable misfortune, another the equalization of opportunity to benefit from modern society, and the third the encouragement of independence. These in turn reflect various interpretations of the two intellectual traditions of 'liberalism' (relief leading to independence) and 'collectivism' (equality assured by democratically endorsed benign authority).

Chapter 1 traces the development of state dependence from 1951 to the present and the corresponding diminution in independence. One of the main factors here has been family breakup. This is shown in the increase in one-parent families from 89,000 in 1951 to 1,059,000 in 1996 ie 11.9 times compared with the (much discussed) 'burden' of pensioners whose numbers increased from 891,000 to 1,764,000 in the same period which is a factor of slightly less than 2. In spite of the

supposed burden of unemployment during the '90s expenditure on one-parent families overtook that on the unemployed in 1995.

The most technically demanding is chapter 2 on 'Poverty Inflation'. This particularly considers two widespread but mistaken beliefs that 'The poor are getting poorer' and 'There are now more people below the poverty line'. Following David Green's argument requires concentration, but the critical factors are whether or not housing subsidies are taken into account, and whether the standard of living is measured by considering income or considering actual expenditure. He is particularly critical of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation whose inquiries into the condition of the poor he considers biased, and selective of information, to give the worst possible picture of the condition of the poor.

In the final chapter 'Independence, Character and Social Policy' Green considers the effects of social policy on the character and motivation of individuals. He shows that many common assumptions about the harsh attitudes to welfare claimants attributed to supposed Right-wing reformers are misunderstandings, and that indiscriminate entitlements to indefinite welfare support can be destructive of worthwhile motivation and 'character'. This is a work whose scholarship and significance are much more important than its shortness and brevity might suggest. There is no excuse for not reading it on grounds of either expense or shortage of time!